

July 2014 No 87

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Dirty work done...

Jeremy Martin makes a splash in only his second season in AMA 250MX by taking the 2014 championship thanks to this muddy second position last weekend in Indiana. The 20 year old marked a first title for Yamaha since 2007 in AMA MX and first in the 'smaller' category since 1992. Naturally this was also the first for the YZ250F. A milestone all-round

Photo by Simon Cudby



AMA-MX





Spray bath...

It was only by three seconds and the gap in the Moto2 championship stands at just 12 points but Esteve Rabat's victory at Brno last weekend – his fifth of the season – was an important gesture in the Marc VDS dispute (Mika Kallio the other protagonist) for this year's title. The Catalan's success for the team draws Kalex up to thirty wins in the class to draw level with Suter and continues to establish the distinctive Moto2 crew as the prominent power in the category

Photo by www.motor-racing.tv/marcvds/



MotoGP







Back behind the wheel...

HRC's Evgeny Bobryshev may have run over a few black cats at the wheel of his Ford Shelby as there are few unluckier riders in MXGP when it comes to an injury plague. We caught up with the friendly and strong Russian after the Belgian Grand Prix at Lommel. Interview and more Archer photos in the next issue where 'Bobby' chats about unfinished business on the factory Honda

Photo by Ray Archer



Photo: Jeff Kardas

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AMA-MX

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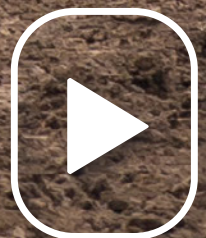
IRONMAN RACEWAY (IN) • AUGUST 16th • R

450MX winner: Ken Roczen, KTM

250MX winner: Marvin Musquin, KTM

ROCZEN SO CLOSE

By Steve Matthes, Photos by Simon Cudby



PLAY

Round eleven of twelve in the Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Championships here in America took place at a brand new facility in Indiana, which is smack dab in the cornfields of the USA. The place, Crawfordsville, isn't as important as what the track actually represents and that was extreme excitement for everyone in the series about a fresh venue to rip up. And looking at the videos done on press day it seemed like it was going to be very epic.

But then the rains came Saturday morning. And then they came some more and what looked like a great track was reduced to a pile of slop. The crowds still came out and we saw some good racing but dry, it could have been awesome. Oh well, us over here following the American series can't really complain because we haven't had a true mud race in a long time. It was bound to happen and it finally did. It also shook up one of the title fights in a big way.

First though, the one title dispute that wasn't affected and was pretty much in the bag was the 250MX. Star Yamaha's Jeremy Martin wrapped up his first professional championship after the first moto when his points lead reached an insurmountable 75 with his second place. It was as unlikely of a title as we've seen in this class since Pro Circuit's Ivan Tedesco snatched the 2005 season. Martin, a second year rider, was thought to be in the mix for podiums and the top five but no one had him clinching the title with three motos to go. Right from the drop of the gate at the first round his cards were on the table. Martin's 1-1-1-1 finishes to start the year were a surprise and he never let up.

For a brand (Yamaha) that hadn't won a 250MX overall, never mind title, since 2004, this season will go down as one of the more unexpected in motocross history. And with his bike, his work ethic, a new two-year contract and oh yeah-the flat out speed, Martin also appears to be here for a long time.

Red Bull KTM's Kenny Roczen had seen his 'over a moto' lead in the 450MX class slip to just seven points $\frac{5}{8}$ after last week's ride in Unadilla.



Talk turned to the last truly wet AMA National on the level that the weather hit Ironman MX (great circuit name). Was it a co-incidence that two European riders ruled in the mud?

AMA MX INDIANA



He seemed powerless to stop his teammate Ryan Dungey from overtaking him for the title. But then the rains came and as we always know, the mud makes it anyone's race right? Well, Roczen showed that his GP experience was still in there as he rocketed out to a huge holeshot in the first moto and was never challenged. The German kid didn't let the conditions bring him down and put on a clinic. Dungey fought hard to get into second and only lose three points but in the second moto Roczen grabbed a second whilst Dungey's best was a ninth. What was easily attainable for Dungey is now only attainable by Roczen having some bad luck. The gap is up to twenty points so that means if Dungey goes 1-1 this weekend at the last round, Roczen has to have to have not one, but two of his worst motos of the year.

Trey Canard won his second moto in as many weeks with a great second race ride. The Honda Muscle Milk rider had Roczen breathing on him in the early laps but the #94 KTM rider dropped it in a turn and Canard's win was secure. Late in the season, Canard is showing that he's getting better and better.

Continuing the banner day for KTM in Indiana, Marvin Musquin won his second national in three races with his 3-1 scores. The Frenchman, also probably used to lapping in the mud, was riding his own pace and allowing others to make mistakes. His steady and calm performance got him the second moto win when kids like TLD Honda's Jessy Nelson and Rockstar KTM's Joey Savatgy perhaps showed more speed but also made mistakes. Late in the second moto fellow Frenchman Christophe Pourcel of the Valli Yamaha team was all over him but Pourcel's ninth in the first moto (from dead last and a pit stop) didn't put him in position to get the overall. Musquin's third did and he held off Pourcel to get the win. And now, after a slow start to the outdoor season, Marvin is in position to get the runner-up spot in the points.

Speaking of Nelson, who knew the Northern Californian rider was so good in the mud? Nelson grabbed his first-ever moto win and first ever overall podium with a great ride in Indiana.

Nelson was looking good to go 1-1 on the day in the second moto when he also holeshot but soon mistakes caught up to him and he slipped back to eighth. Nelson opened some eyes though and let's see if his confidence from this moto win helps him at the last race.

In the 450MX class Eli Tomac was very fast but pit stops in each moto for goggles and small crashes hurt him. At times the GEICO Honda rider was the fastest man on the track but hard to collect an overall finish with mistakes and stops.

As usual goggle prep was important at a mud race and some riders, like Dungey in the second moto, tossed his goggles early and never worried about getting more. Others like Tomac made sure to have fresh ones on at all times. Also interesting was, without rain falling, the riders who chose to wear roll-offs and which ones chose just tear-offs. It seemed to be a bit of a mix 50/50 as to what guys wanted to do. Ryan Sipes got pulled out of the off-road racing series he was concentrating on after years racing motocross to fill-in for Davi Millsaps on the Rockstar KTM and the results have been mixed. But this weekend in the mud Sipes finished third in the second moto and fourth overall on the day. Sipes showed that perhaps his off-road experience had been helping him as, despite two falls, he held off riders like Chad Reed and Andrew Short in the second moto.

I'm not sure what Freddie Noren is going to do for 2015 but his fill-in ride on the factory Honda of Justin Barcia is turning out very well. He had a come-from-WAY-back charge in the second moto to pass Dungey late in the race and finish top ten overall. And he's going for tenth overall in the series this weekend. With Noren's lack of supercross experience it's going to be tough for him to get a solid ride over here but maybe some Grand Prix teams are paying attention and can give the Swede a spot there because in motocross, he's very, very good.

AMA MX INDIANA



Roczen finds a rut and powers to a twenty point lead with one round to go. It was a result that answered the critics. Musquin as well continues to embarrass the French Federation over their (admittedly difficult) Motocross of Nations selection





AMA MX INDIANA





AMA MX INDIANA

It was a day when rider's played the percentages; both of staying on two wheels and keeping clear sight. This worked for Chad Reed (in sixth) while Dean Wilson and Fred Noren ploughed on...





Jessy Nelson thrives to give Honda their best result in AMA 250MX this year. Blake Baggett struggles while Christophe Pourcel (right) revels in the technical conditions where line-choice and grip-search was crucial. TV presenter Georgia Albertson probably enjoyed the English feeling to the day





AMA MX PRO MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP

450MX RESULT

Riders

1	Ken Roczen, GER	KTM
2	Trey Canard, USA	Honda
3	Ryan Dungey, USA	KTM
4	Ryan Sipes, USA	KTM
5	Andrew Short, USA	KTM

450MX STANDINGS (AFTER 11 OF 12 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Ken Roczen	494
2 Ryan Dungey	474
3 Trey Canard	418
4 Brett Metcalfe	304
5 Eli Tomac	281

250MX RESULT

Riders

1	Marvin Musquin, FRA	KTM
2	Joseph Savatgy, USA	KTM
3	Jessy Nelson, USA	Honda
4	Christophe Pourcel, FRA	Yamaha
5	Cooper Webb, USA	Yamaha

250MX STANDINGS (AFTER 11 OF 12 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Jeremy Martin (champion)	450
2 Blake Baggett	381
3 Cooper Webb	379
4 Marvin Musquin	374
5 Christophe Pourcel	355

AMA MX INDIANA

Champions? Martin celebrates 250MX while Roczen is within touching distance of being the first rider since South African Grant Langston to be FIM MX World Champion and AMA MX Champion



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Photos: R. Schedl, H. Mitterbauer

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AMA MX INDIANA

Anybody spot Marvin?

REED SPEAK...

By Steve Matthes

It hasn't been the easiest outdoor season for Team Two-Two's Chad Reed. The former 450MX champion has now had a couple of outdoor motocross seasons that aren't going to be remembered fondly. Initially battling a late start because of his supercross injury and then later a back injury, Reed's struggled to get to his old level. But this past weekend in Indiana, under treacherous conditions, Reed brought home his best results of the year in the slop. Afterwards, hanging out with fellow Aussie Brett Metcalfe and talking to some fans we caught up to Chad to ask him about his day.

It's your best race of the year in the worst conditions we've had for a while. Not a lot of fun but you've got to be happy. It's a solid overall result which have been lacking for you lately.

It's about talent and skill out here today, so I just rose to the occasion.

Yeah that's it...you got good starts which is a key...

I'm just joking with the previous comment. I felt solid actually coming into the week. Like I said on our podcast, until the last month I've been basically chilling at home with the kids and with (wife) Ellie. It's kind of been my off-season. Maybe I just need to have a little fun again. I felt decent coming into the weekend and then practice went well. I got good starts both motos; I was up there. Second moto I actually was about fourth out of the gate and then I don't know if I wasn't aggressive enough or it was one of those situa-

tions where I found myself in the wrong place, wrong time. Second turn, third turn, it was just kind of like a chain reaction of finding myself in the wrong place. So that was kind of a little bit of a bummer. And then I basically just had to let the race come back to me. Eli [Tomac] darted off and got goggles. Then I just tried to put my head down.

When [Ryan] Dungey passed me he wasn't really going anywhere. Obviously I've been in the championship hunt before, and I was kind of like, dang it, do I really want to mess with him? I like him and I'd rather see him get good points. I was kind of like, okay, I'll just kind of sit with him. He wasn't really going anywhere and then he made a mistake and actually kind of got stuck and I passed him and then I just found my rhythm and unfortunately towards the end there lost my goggles. Then just couldn't get by [Josh] Grant or [Andrew] Short.

I don't know if you knew that Ryan Sipes was third just in front but there was a group of guys together. There wasn't a lot of passing going on but it was exciting...

I didn't know who was third but I could see Sipes was there. Then I saw Shorty and obviously JG. Honestly I actually felt like my pace was easily...in normal conditions maybe pass those guys and go to third. I just didn't have any goggles on. I was just kind of a passenger really. But overall it was good. I felt like some of the feeling that I've been chasing is just coming back. I hate to say it but we're back on a spring



fork and maybe that's why. But hopefully next week we'll have the same kind of comfort that we had this week.

We know you like Utah this coming weekend, so it should be a great race for you...

You say that every time but I actually don't mind Utah. It wasn't that bad. I actually don't mind the place. And I've seen the track has actually changed quite a lot. Looks like it's considerably shorter. Hopefully the changes will be good as well. It was really deep last year in the middle of the track, so I would hope that maybe they could work on that this year. But other than that, yeah, I'm looking forward to it.

You didn't ride press day, which was too bad because this track looked really good when it was dry...

I walked the track. Let's not say I walked it; I drove the Kawasaki Teryx around the track. The track looked badass. It kind of looked really European up and down the hills, in and out of the trees. I would probably say one of the best tracks that I've seen in recent years anywhere in the world. I think Marc Peters did a great job. Basically they dig it up every week, they leave it like that, they water the crap out of it and then there's just really one line. Last night we told Marc, hey, you should try to drag it, make it deep but then drag it. And then we can kind of go anywhere on the racing line.

And you riders can start building lines up...

Exactly. You hate to kind of bag on certain people but John Ayers' way of doing race tracks is just terrible. I think he should stick to promoting and selling t-shirts and let the track builders and track promoters do their job.

Or maybe listen to the riders...

Or take advice from the riders. Honestly, Marc Peters, I give him credit because he kind of went above and beyond and did something that actually got him into trouble and got him yelled at but it was unfortunate that it rained. I was sad actually for him just because the track was badass when I went to sleep last night and I was really looking forward to it. So I don't know, maybe that had something to do with me doing good today. I was pretty excited. I don't mind the mud. The mud's always been pretty good to me.





NO SHO

Some see life as a challenging track
toward success, glory and podiums.
Some just see a track.

▶ ADAM CIANCARULO

ART CUTS



THE MAGICIAN

JOHN VOLLEBERG IS A 44 YEAR OLD DUTCH TUNER LOCATED IN OOSTRUM NEAR THE GERMAN BORDER. HIS WIZARDRY WITH ENGINES HAS MADE HIM ONE OF THE MOST WANTED MEN IN MOTOCROSS. WE WANTED TO KNOW HOW & WHY...

By Adam Wheeler Photos by Ray Archer

It looks like a typical workshop (chaotic, dark, posters scattered on walls) but the spread of machinery is impressive and the glimmering sea of engine components laid out on workbenches is systematic in its own way. Outside, an adjoining house is still in the early phases of construction: John Volleberg is a busy man. A man in demand. But the friendly Dutchman still has time to talk about his burgeoning profile in MXGP where his expertise has become highly sought after for squeezing vital extra – crucial – horsepower.

“It is easy to walk in here and think ‘yeah, it is just a bunch of engines and tools’ but John’s work is second to none,” says Hitachi Construction Machinery UK KTM’s Shaun Simpson, a rider who is fifth in the world and was recently crowned British Champion using a 450SX-F primed engine by Volleberg. “The tools that he has and the knowledge in the guy’s brain is unbelievable. That’s all he sleeps, drinks and eats.”

"When I started my own company I had no idea I'd be working one day in motocross," the man himself says. "Now it is almost 70% of my clients. I also do a lot of rally, autocross and road race. I was always motocrossing myself and it is nice to be involved. When I was a kid I started working in an overhaul company and then a few tuning shops mechanic-ing for supersport and superbike. In 2005 I started my own workshop and it has been going good so far."

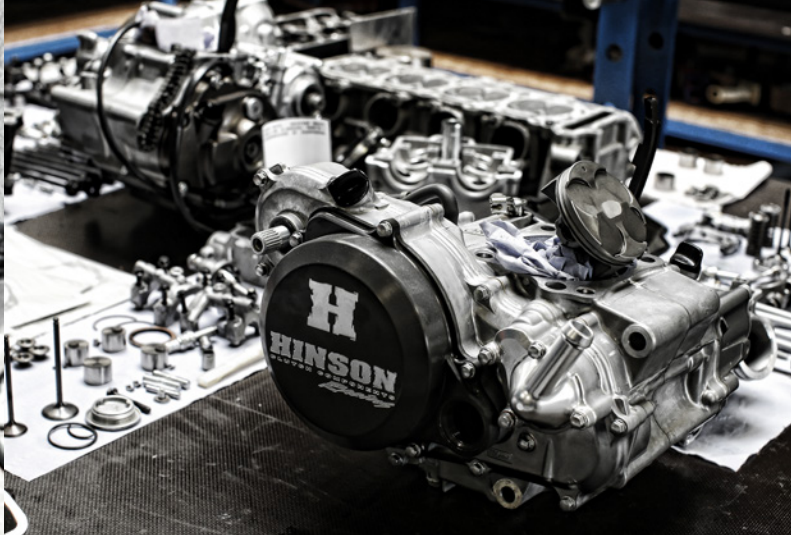
Volleberg's eye for optimising engine efficiency in motocross began with Simpson back towards the end of 2007. When the Scot's team morphed into KTM UK in 2008 it was a breakthrough for both rider (then 20) and Volleberg Motorsport. Simpson breached the MX2 podium, won the first of his two British crowns and finished fourth in the world. Volleberg now tweaks and treats the engines of six other Grand Prix squads and recently lent his nuance to Suzuki's MX2 factory efforts; Glenn Coldenhoff then took three podiums from the first four GPs of this year on a bike that struggled to start well in 2013.

"I had a lot of work and especially when we linked up with Shaun Simpson in 2007-08," he recounts. "That was a good time for me because he had a lot of good starts in the Grands Prix and people saw that. It was helpful for the company. I had a few riders in the Dutch Championship at that time but he was the first top world championship rider. That was special and Shaun made some nice advertising for me! At Uddevalla [Swedish Grand Prix] he had two holeshots and was leading the race. Suddenly we were in the magazines and people heard the name on TV or through websites. It was strange."



JOHN VOLLEBERG





His acumen with KTM engines in particular caught the attention of bosses in Austria. "I talked with Pit Beirer [KTM Motorsport Director] and helped with some things," he explains. "There was the chance to work with KTM full-time but the workshop was going well and I had some ideas of combining the house and the workplace."

Volleberg has a penchant for the Austrian hardware. "The KTM is quite good standard and not so expensive for tuning; I'm sure I can make an engine in two days. But with Honda, Yamaha and Suzuki then sometimes it can be a lot of work and money with some special stuff. Quite difficult. With a Honda I will need one and a half weeks."

It is awkward to prize specifics but how exactly does Volleberg go about creating not only a powerplant that can get a rider out of a motocross Grand Prix gate but also empower a privateer to be able to consider premium world championship results?

"If we have a new bike that we don't already know from stock then we run checks with components you can buy like different pipes and electronics," he reveals. "We then take the engine apart and see what is possible to change, like our own manufactured cams and valves. We shift a lot around sometimes, even the bore and stroke, the gearbox, clutch and some other adjustments to help with reliability. Sometimes we make such a change that the engine doesn't fit back in the frame and we have to forge new brackets. It can be quite a lot of work."

"I work on all engines with the same feeling," he continues. "The Honda is different because it is a single cam. Everything engine has its own character. Japanese bikes are harder. If you spend a day working on a KTM [250] then normally you have quite a fast engine. Yamaha is not so bad at this moment with the '14 model. It is harder with Honda and Suzuki to get that extra 5-6 horsepower from stock. Power on the 450cc bikes are not so bad. Some riders say it is too aggressive and they want more

'top', especially for the start. We then play with the power to find the right solution for a rider. The goal is always to look for better, even through the season."

Volleberg has linked up with the likes of Marc de Reuver and almost won the EMX250 European Championship this year with Brian Bogers; the Dutch youngster tying on points for the 2014 crown but losing on the tally of moto victories. As his work in the racing world has increased so has the tuner's knowledge of playing 'paddock politics' and learning where the lines and boundaries are set. He says: "A lot of the teams have partners, like an exhaust supplier, so you need to work with that. If it is something really bad then maybe you can talk about it and perhaps change. We try to help the team get the best performance without costing too much money."

It means that John is frequently one of the faces in the background; a key specialist that nobody hears about but is instrumental on what you see on the track. As evident in Simpson regularly placing his production 450SX-F in the leading sect of an MXGP start against more than a dozen factory motorcycles. "I try to be upfront with the team because I want a good result as well and that everybody is happy," he goes on. "If some mechanics have some ideas then I encourage them to come over and work on it together. The end result has to be as good as we can get it and that doesn't mean it always has to be about what I say."

It hasn't all been about the mud. There are signs of bounteous road racing work in the workshop and even a special project in 2009 where Volleberg helped create the world's fastest road bike from a Suzuki Hayabusa for a client from Amsterdam. "We changed everything: gearbox, clutch, big head, big valves, big turbo, double injectors and we made 650 horsepower at the rear wheel," he says. "We made a lot of testing in England and the main problem was wheelspin and it was not easy because the bike had to have road tyres. it was good to get the record though."

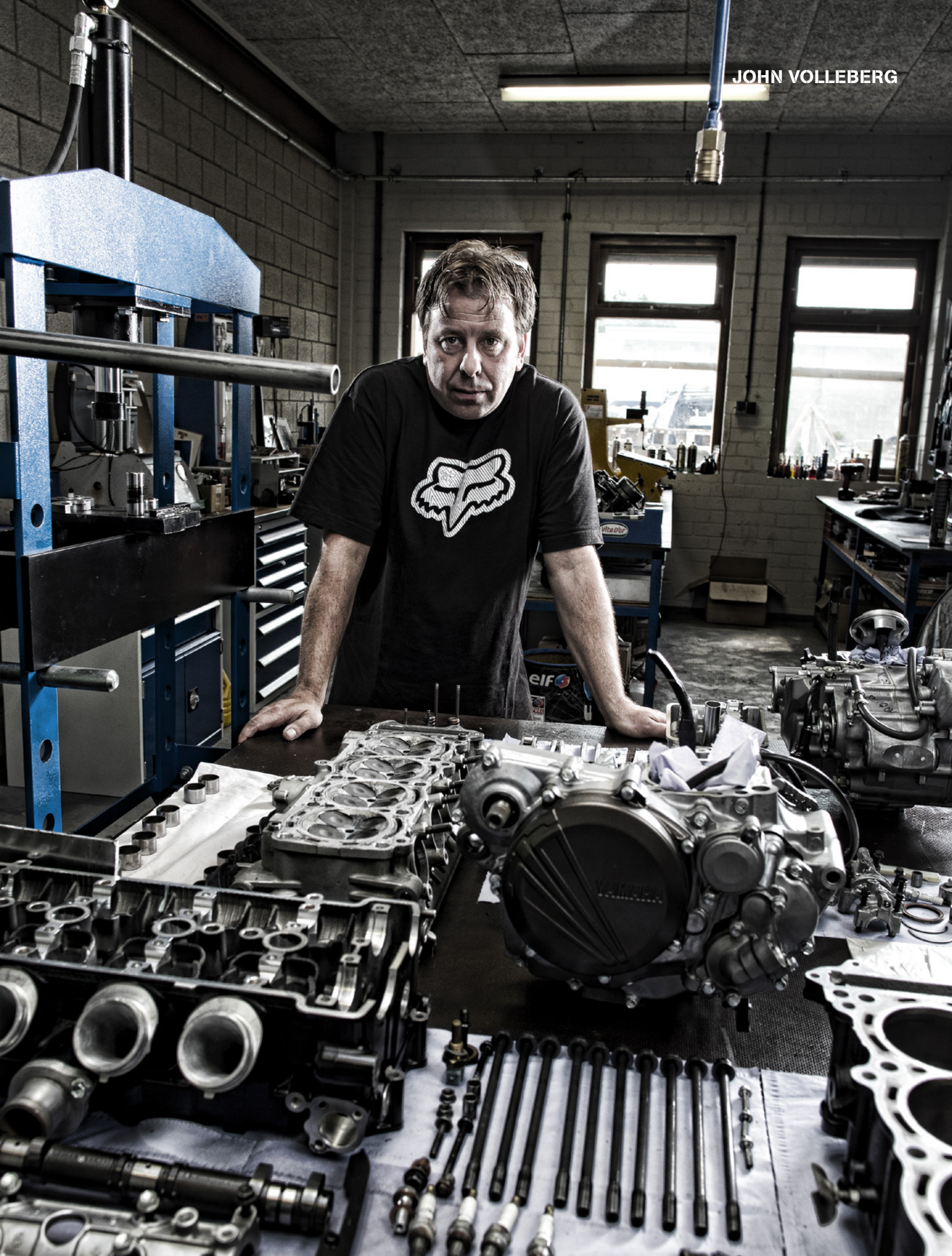


Volleberg clearly knows he way around a lump of metal, oil and moving parts. When I mention the phrase 'two-stroke' to him he recoils. Obviously not a great fan. However he does feel the development of four-stroke engines for top flight racing is becoming impractical. "When I started the company I decided to focus on four-stroke and it was a good choice because the percentage of clients from two-stroke to four-stroke went completely in the other direction," he comments. "I think now it is going to crazy levels and the cost of tuning is going up and is not proportionate across the brands. It is too expensive for some teams to race. In world championship you need to spend some serious money to compete in MX2 now."

Modesty – as well as dedication and passion – seems to be one of Volleberg's traits. When we wrap up our conversation by trying to pin down why he has been successful he replies: "I don't know! It all started as a hobby for me. If you start with a bike that doesn't go so well and get it 'going' then there is satisfaction for everyone and word spreads."

"I normally do everything on my own but it is getting difficult to do the engine and the frame now. I do the tuning and that's it. When it comes to the testing then it is something more and we're at the stage where the company might need to grow. We normally do everything right here and if I see we need a machine for more than one use then I'll buy it. We have an engine dyno, bike dyno, car dyno. Welding machines, grinding, lathes, mills, injector test, cleaning... everything you need for tuning."

So it would seem...





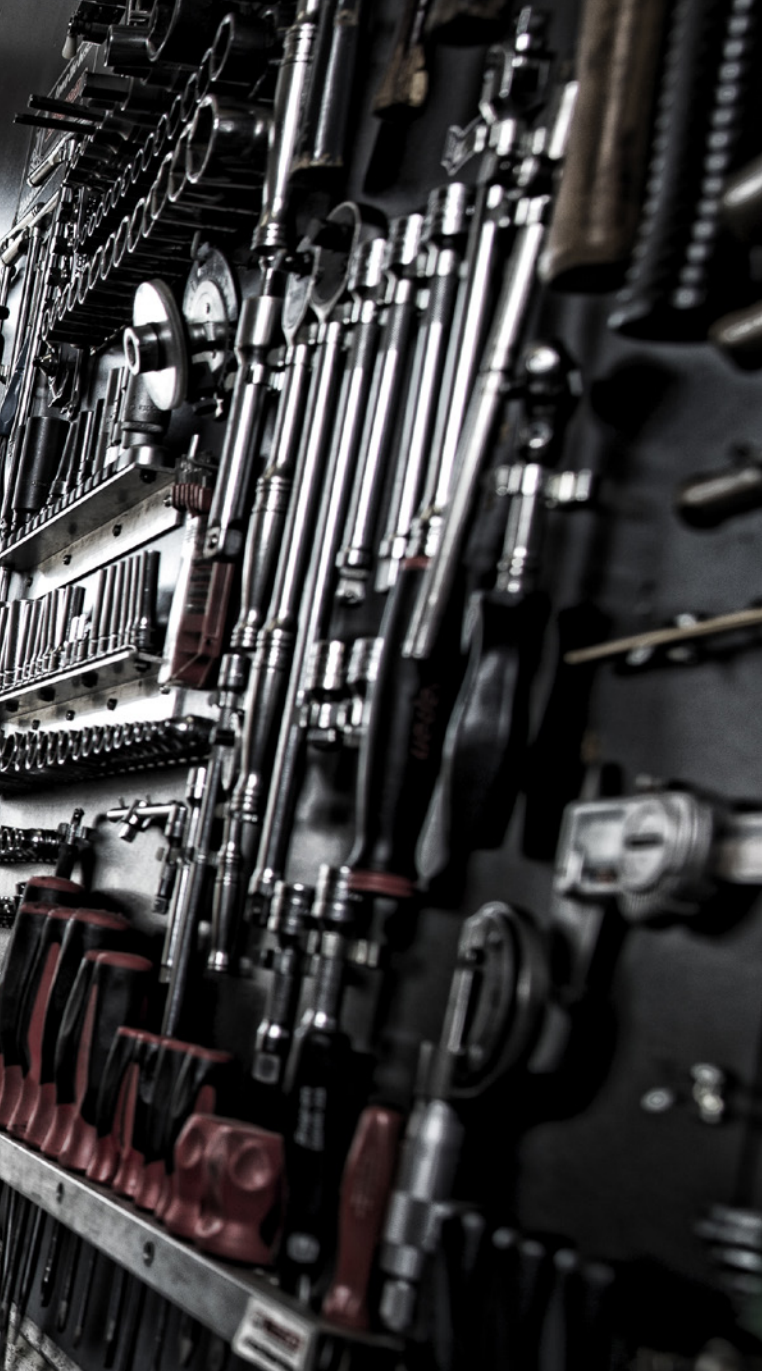
A CHAMPION CHAT'S:

SHAUN SIMPSON SHEDS SOME LIGHT ON THE VOLLEBERG POWER BY ASSOCIATION

What were the circumstances in which you found John and knew he could bring something special to the plate?

I think it was back in 2007. We had just run the Grand Prix at Valkenswaard and had a 'mare that weekend. We had one tuned engine and another that knackered-up. My Dad had been speaking to another mechanic at the GP and said "we're in a mess because we have another race next weekend and we don't have any more engines ready. Where can we go to sort it out?" The guy gave us John's workshop number and

we went for a visit. My Dad went in and didn't come out for two hours. I was waiting outside thinking 'jeez, what's going on?' He eventually came out and said "I've had an amazing chat with this guy and he has all the machines and looks very professional. He knows what he's talking about and can do a job for us." We picked the [cylinder] head up two days later and basically it was brand new – like it was out of the factory – and he was pumped. The next year we had a real push with KTM and my Dad knew that if we wanted to do it right then we



JOHN VOLLEBERG

For this year how different was your Volleberg race-bike compared to a stock KTM?

KTM's stock bike is great and in the winter it is fine for me to ride through the mud and crap until my fitness is up and running. Once you get to the internationals and GP level and start 'twisting it' for the racing year then John's engine comes into its own. On a 250 you want power wherever you can find it: bottom, mid, top. On a 450 you have that power already, so it is a matter of putting it where you want it: more on the bottom or mellowing the middle, stretching the top. The ECU and electronics are playing a part and John has had to move with the times and he's picked it up; he quite likes his laptop! His engines get me out of the starts – one of the most important parts of the race – even though that is still something we need to work on in terms of getting holeshots. We tailored that bike and after seven years John knows how I like my engines. We are still developing the KTM through the year for different tracks.

It seemed like you really profited in 2008. It was the season that launched your career and led eventually to a factory KTM ride...

It is easy to see in MX2 and I would definitely not have been where I was in 2008 without John; the amount of holeshots I had that year was insane. My bike didn't sound as good as a factory one but it had the power and it made it easy to ride and take the bumps and corners. I don't think we would have had that consistency because John prides himself on his engines' strength. Anyone can make an engine run with a million horsepower but if it blows up...that's the other aspect. Together with my Dad who assembles the engines we've had a good system this year and – touch wood – have not had a single problem. We've had good equipment from KTM and have made the whole package reliable week-in week-out.

needed to get a workshop that was close and in the end we were two doors away from John's old place. That's how it started and Roger [Maggie, KTM UK Team Owner] said: "let's go for it". Monday morning after a GP my Dad would be in there and dyno-ing the bike, stripping the bike and John would do the head. A whole winter of preparation and stuff and that's how it worked.

So, as tuner, he was pretty much part of the team...

Very involved. John wanted to know how the bike was every weekend. The bottom power, top, the starts. Sometimes we'd go out and make a little test. It is the same sort of concept now that he is doing with some other GP riders.



CARBON
CONSTRUCTION





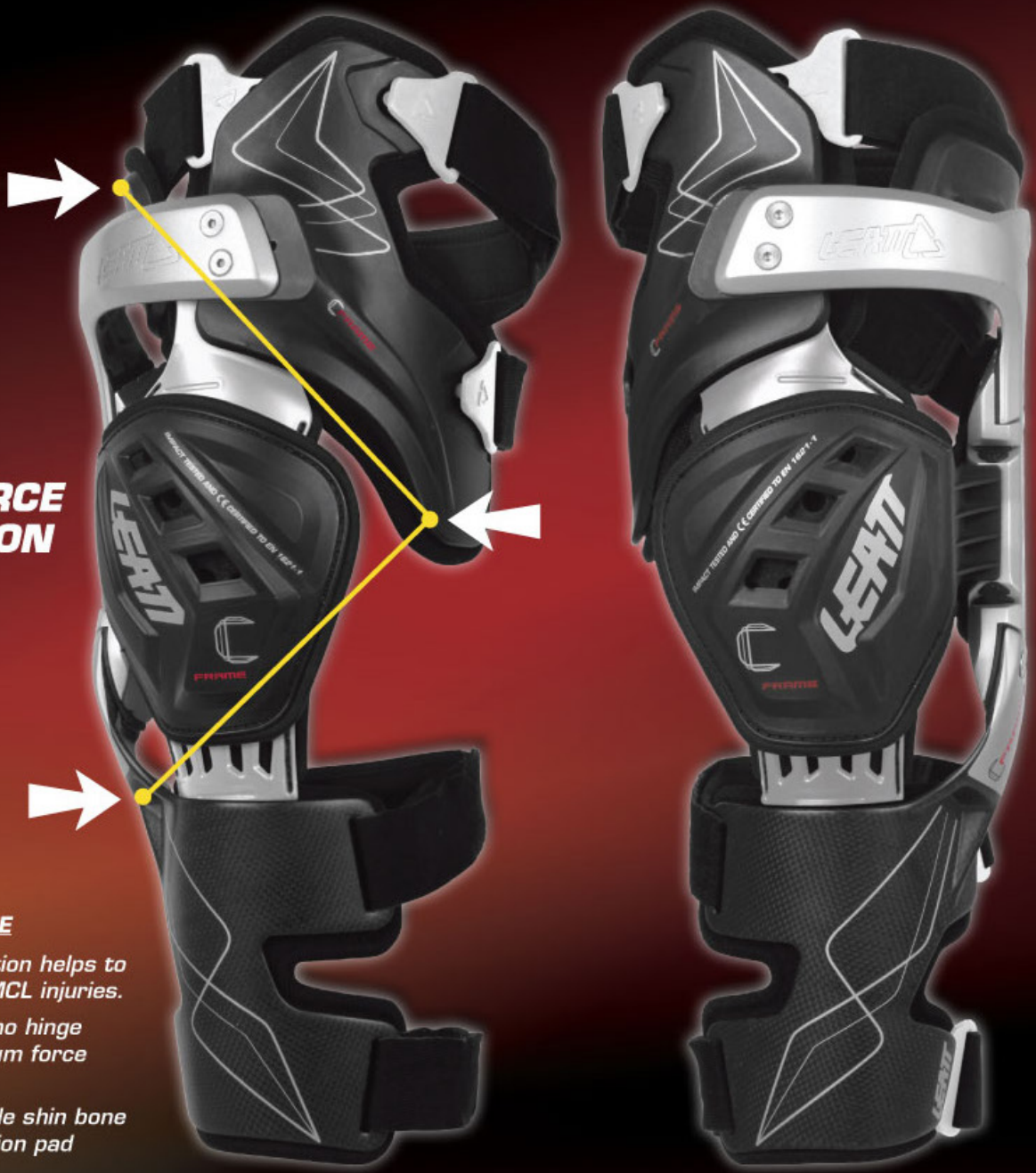
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REACHING THE LAST...

By Adam Wheeler

In the next week or two the FIM should issue the entry list for the second Grand Prix to take place in Brazil this year, at Trindade for the State of Goas event, round sixteen of seventeen. It could make for interesting reading. I've expressed my opinion more than once that the closing fixtures to the 2014 championship would give some barometer as to the state or health of the series. How many Grand Prix regulars will we see on the line for the South American double-header with Mexico following hard upon? Both MXGP and MX2 categories have yet to be decided in terms of the championship titles (and MX2 could go right down to the last lap of the year) so this is a positive scenario for the general picture. There are still positions up for grabs in the top five-six of each class so this makes each precious point quite lucrative for riders examining their bonus schemes.

It has been unusual lately to read more press releases from teams about riders being released early from their contracts (Lieber, Petrov, Rat-tray). Such arrangements conveniently thus remove the need for costs of equipment and personnel transportation across the world. Youthstream provide some appreciated (and necessary) assistance with freight and travel expense but it looks like this last gallivant across the Atlantic might be a stretch too far for some. Factory teams gripe but they can largely source and plan budget for overseas trips. It is those valuable satellite and middle teams that really need assistance and whose existence is based on a businessman/owner's pockets or a raft of

sponsors (from whom any delay or failure in payment throws a serious spanner in the works) that most require assurances and consideration. These squads – let us not forget - are the fertile ground for many young riders coming through the European EMX pyramid to aim towards, if a direct leap into factory status is not initially possible. For 2015 their presence has been tossed into an even brighter focus because there simply isn't enough saddles for the fast and capable Grand Prix athletes currently on the scene.

It is worrying when the racers who are fifth and sixth in the premier class of the FIM Motocross World Championship – British Champion Shaun Simpson and Kawasaki's factory star Steven Frossard - still do not have a fixed contract for 2015 nearing the end of the season. Each case is personal and particular but if the rumours become true and Frossard considers sitting out a year in '15 due to a lack of a viable opportunity then this would send a pretty big message; more so perhaps than there only being 12 Grand Prix riders entering the gate in Brazil (fleshed out by 10-15 locals).

Going back to South America then the shape of the paddock will not matter too greatly to the local promoters. The principal stars and names will be there and championships will be won... and the natives get a chance to race at the top level. Knowing the passion of the Brazilians for the sport it is likely to be a successful meeting whatever the attendance figures from the MXGP fraternity.



I did an interview with new FIM Motocross Commission Director Tony Skillington at the last Grand Prix in Belgium and he spoke of a 'collective responsibility' to the sport. These are not superfluous words. There needs to be a responsibility to the teams to make sure that they can constitute the very fabric of Grand Prix and to nurture the stars and those of tomorrow. The teams on the other hand should ensure there is responsibility towards the riders. The stars have earning power but ones still 'on their way' (the Febvres, Charliers, Butrons, Nicholls, Tonus', Guillods) are in danger of being lost. The risk and work simply doesn't equal the reward, and this is the quandary in which Frossard is currently swimming and in which a former world champion and valued member of the paddock – David Philippaerts – almost drowned until he ploughed every last penny into forming his own race outfit.

Among the press corps there is still a feeling of disbelief sometimes when we hear of salaries offered to good Grand Prix riders. Yes, they ride a motorbike for a living but Joel Roelants' accident this summer is yet another reminder of how close disaster and a life-altering moment actually is. To consider putting so much on the line for a salary that barely touches 50,000 euros seems absurd. Through the decades racers have always generated their own support, whether it was for extra throttle grips or a lucrative personal sponsor. Now it seems the skill to be able to secure a personal-backer has to be part of a rider's professional arsenal to go

with the determination, bravery, technique and fitness. Motos are a window and 'showcase' as much as they are a competition.

Teams holding out on contract negotiations when they know 'later means cheaper' is part of the harsh economics of the sport (and maybe they've had their fingers burnt by previous overpaying-under performing investments) but it doesn't seem fair. If someone like Valentin Guillod, to pick a name, can drive a team's profile up, put sponsors on the TV and in podium photographs then he has delivered on his fee and will allow an efficient and proactive team to be able to seek even more backing for the following year.

There should be collective responsibility in MXGP; a place in which there are many diverse characters and strands of professionalism. But this is also a sport and environment where competition rules, and it would be naïve to assume that same philosophy of self-gain doesn't happen in every single small corner of a Grand Prix paddock.

The races in Brazil and Mexico could be wonderful spectacles, and I hope they are. The wisdom of finishing the FIM World Championship overseas could end up being questioned again but I hope some people – some key people – look at how they arrived there in the first place.



ALL GOOD THINGS...

LIKE SOME OTHER OBSERVERS THERE WAS A PERVERSE WISH TO ACTUALLY SEE MARC MARQUEZ TO WIN EVERY GRAND PRIX THIS YEAR BUT THE INEVITABLE SOON HAPPENED THANKS TO A SUPERB PERFORMANCE BY THE OTHER REPSOL HONDA. THE CHAMPION MANAGED TEN FROM ELEVEN BEFORE HITTING SOME SET-UP/TYRE ISSUES AT BRNO AND NEEDS JUST THREE MORE THIS SEASON TO SET A NEW ALL-TIME RECORD SURPASSING BOTH MICK DOOHAN AND GIACOMO AGOSTINI

Photos by Honda Pro Images/Northcott, Tech3.fr, yamahamotogp.com, Ducati Corse Press, Milagro, Marc VDS, Gold and Goose, KTM



PLAY

Marquez in a damp practice run at Brno. The skies would match his mood after the race as the Czech Republic represented his first non-win/non-podium finish of '14

As two Ducatis led into Brno's interminable turn one, Dani Pedrosa powered into third, and by turn four Marc Marquez's pole position advantage had been quickly whittled down into a lowly fifth place as Jorge Lorenzo also barged his way through. On several occasions this season, Marquez has taken his time to get into the race, as he regularly lets the early exchanges take place in front of him, before mounting a steady assault and taking charge. So, nothing of concern in his quest for win number 11 on the bounce.

Up front, Lorenzo's choice of running a soft meant he made some aggressive manoeuvres to take the lead – he knew his only chance was trying to escape the clutches of the field. Quick to spot his intentions, Pedrosa had to switch tactics and chase down the Yamaha man rather than allow the race to come to him. Perhaps it is something he has done too few times in his career - but on the ball this time - the Honda man was hot on the Yamaha's heels.

Although Valentino Rossi had also briefly squeezed past him for a couple of laps, still you felt Marquez had something to offer, and as the Ducati duo of Iannone and Dovizioso dropped back he was ominously starting to make short shrift of his rivals once more.

That was until Iannone refused to lie down and take the punishment. A fiery exchange ensued in the stadium section, as “the Maniac” met Marquez's advances with the kind of resolute attitude that won him so many fans during his spell in the lower classes. They made contact three times before Marquez eventually could consider himself past, and crucially he also opened the door for Rossi to come through too.

Up front the battle was reminiscent of 2012, when Lorenzo and Pedrosa put on a race-long performance for the ages, and it looked like it might go that way again as Pedrosa got past his lifelong adversary on lap six. Lorenzo's plan had not worked, and whether or not he took a couple of moments to realise this and consider changing tack, he was soon dropped by a second.







How on earth can Moto3 racing be good for the nerves? These were typical scenes at Brno in what was another classic

Marquez was comfortable in third place and closed the gap to Lorenzo, albeit minimally, but he started to make some uncharacteristic errors and was missing the apexes that he normally hits with deadeye precision. Clearly he did not have the pace to stick with the leading pair, and although he rebuffed a couple of attacks from Rossi behind, as he ran wide heading into turn six on lap 13, the veteran was able to ease into the podium spot.

The race steadied for the remainder, with just the thrill of seeing Iannone and Dovizioso duke it out (pun intended) on the last lap and the younger Andrea taking the spoils of fifth.

Pedrosa crossed to take the win, his 26th in the premier class, and his delight at winning was matched by relief that he could beat his teammate once more. Although they hadn't won, another double-podium for the Yamaha duo of Lorenzo and Rossi will have given them the same belief, which bodes well for the run-in of the championship.

It was a fantastic way for Marquez's record run to be broken with over 138,000 fans cheering for the action never to stop. The awesome footage of flares and fireworks on the banks matched perfectly the atmosphere of the first couple of laps of the race, and showed why Brno is such a special place. News emanating from the weekend also led us to believe that despite concerns that this could be the last Czech Grand Prix it should be safe for a couple more years yet at the very least.

It was a weekend to show that when you fear the worst in motorcycle racing, there is always something just around the next corner.

In Moto2 after three rounds in which he has been unable to impose his metronomic rhythm on the race and come under increasing pressure from his Marc VDS teammate Mika Kallio, Tito Rabat once again dominated the rain-threatened

event from start to finish. The Finn did well to apply some pressure in the early laps and take a solid second place after two crashes during the weekend, whilst Sandro Cortese was finally able to celebrate a first Moto2 podium in third.

The lightweight class of Moto3 saw the kind of contest that TV-highlights-programme editors despair at, with the lead changing virtually every corner and a lead group of 17 providing more banzai manoeuvres than an episode of Jackass. The mayhem was topped off when Alex Rins mistakenly celebrated victory at the end of the penultimate lap, meaning the pre-season title favourite has still to stand on the top step this year.

Amidst the chaos, the experienced head of Alexis Masbou came to the fore, as the Frenchman celebrated his first ever win in what was his 133rd start, much like Vazquez just a week earlier who claimed his first 25 points at Indy on his 116th start. Masbou's move on championship leader Jack Miller in the final corner opened the door for Enea Bastianini to sneak to a richly-deserved second place. "The Beast", as the teenager is nicknamed, was nursing a cracked ankle from a practice highside - he clearly has grit to match his talent.

Back in third Danny Kent was unaffected by the craziness in front as he managed to ride the final set of esses perfectly to drive past Miller and Marquez on the run to the line and claim his and Husqvarna's first podium of the season. He had started the second lap in 17th place, and the final lap in ninth, so to even have a sniff of the champagne, he deserves plaudits aplenty.

Battle of the old foes. Pedrosa gives the Spanish their 501st GP win, 101 in the premier class. It was the sixth win for Honda at Brno in 28 Grands Prix at the track



MotoGP CZE



PLAY

Pedrosa reaches his number, 26, in Grand Prix wins (MotoGP class) and also helps Honda break their record for most wins in a row since 2003





MotoGP CZE





Ducati battle while Crutchlow takes the other Duke motocrossing. The three factory heads meet the press somewhat awkwardly while Bastianini and Masbou celebrated milestones at Brno



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THE POWER OF BELIEF...

By Gavin Emmett

It may have taken 11 races to happen, and we had started to think that it never would, but thankfully this weekend in Brno 'the run' finally came to an end. I had speculated that he would be a title contender at the start of the year, but things just didn't seem to be happening for him... so I was delighted when Danny Kent could celebrate his first podium finish of the year.

On a serious note though, I'm chuffed that Danny showed some of the perseverance and tenacity that stood out a couple of years ago in Moto3, hopefully he can now kick on from here and challenge for wins once more.

Of course in MotoGP, it was his namesake Dani Pedrosa who broke the most talked about record since Mr. Blobby made it to number one. I don't think many around the paddock would have expected Pedrosa to be the man to do it, but after a particularly disappointing race in Indianapolis, he put together a magnificent weekend and showed just why he has been re-signed by Repsol Honda for the next two years.

As Marc Marquez limped home in fourth, off the podium for the first time since Australia last year, one Yamaha employee who shall remain nameless smiled as he muttered to me with relief, "So he IS human after all!" Seeing how they had the original 'alien' I'd have thought they'd be aware of riders' terrestrial status.

This is a crucial point to make though because after ten races being brow beaten by Marquez his lead trio of rivals know he is beatable yet again and psychologically that is a massive hurdle to overcome.

As well as Pedrosa's resurgence, I was also hugely impressed with Ducati's steady progress and in particular Andrea Iannone. As the flamboyant Italian has said on a number of occasions in terms of MotoGP bikes he knows no different, quite unlike Cal Crutchlow who is finding it devastatingly hard to switch his style from the Yamaha. (The last man to tame the red bike, Casey Stoner had just a year on the 990cc Honda with Michelin tyres before his successful switch to the Ducati 800 with Bridgestones - also knew no different and just expressed himself on the new bike.)

I would add that Andrea Dovizioso is performing admirably as ever having switched from Yamaha, but Iannone's aggression on Marquez in the early laps showed he fears nothing, and finishing fifth ahead of Dovizioso and the likes of Bradl and Aleix Espargaro is a big plus. My pitlane pal Neil Hodgson turned to me after his fierce early exchanges with the #93 and remarked, quite astutely, "I think some of them forget they're in a race sometimes. Even though someone may be quicker than you, you've still got to race them for it!"

Iannone has raced Marquez a number of times in the lower classes, and beaten him on occasions, and like Pol Espargaro and Scott Redding is part of that new breed of riders who will always believe they have what it takes to beat the world champion given the right machinery. Thankfully for the remainder of the season Pedrosa, Lorenzo and Rossi also believe it too.



TEST

ALL THE RAGE

By Roland Brown, Photos by Albert Debus

BMW CONTINUE TO DEFY EXPECTATION AND CONVENTION WITH THEIR ASSAULT ON MOTORCYCLING AND SWEEP ROLAND ALONG WITH THE CHARMS AND STYLE POWER OF THE R nine T. READ ON TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT THE BIKE YOU MIGHT WANT, BUT WILL BE HARD PUSHED TO OBTAIN...



BMW R nine T



BMW's R nineT is the best example yet of the way that major manufacturers are trying to grab a piece of motorcycling's vibrant custom scene. The modern mania for modified bikes isn't about flashy choppers like those that were built in the States a decade or more ago. It's a more down-to-earth and global phenomenon, stretching from enthusiastic amateurs to professional workshops including Deus Ex Machina (see OTOR #76), and linked via web sites such as BikeEXIF.com and the Bike Shed (www.thebikeshed.cc).

This trend has not been missed by the more switched-on bike makers especially the ones whose bikes are popular with customisers. Triumph and Moto Guzzi were involved with the recent Bike Shed custom show in London. Yamaha had a big presence at the recent Wheels & Waves event in Biarritz, has collaborated with several leading custom builders, and has even reintroduced the old single-cylinder SR400 that has inspired many customs.

BMW is also an eager participant, not least because its traditional aircooled boxers are also popular with the custom crowd. One firm, Kevil's Speed Shop from Devon, specialises in them and counts David Beckham among its clients. The German flat twins' blend of style, simplicity and solid if unspectacular performance has inspired modified machines from workshops including Urban Motor from Berlin, Blitz from Paris, Fuel from Barcelona and Ritmo Sereno from Tokyo.

The BMW factory got involved, a couple of years ago, via a classy orange custom boxer, inspired by the iconic R90S superbike of the Seventies, and created in conjunction with US custom builder Roland Sands to celebrate the firm's 90th anniversary. The new R nineT also honours BMW's 90 years, in its name as well as its look. But this is a production model, intended to bring some hand-crafted style to the showroom.



BMW R nine T





BMW R nine T

BMW's recent new boxers have moved to liquid cooling but the firm stuck to air cooling for the nineT, by using the 1170cc, dohc eight-valve unit that previously powered the R1200GS, and is still fitted to the R1200R roadster. The engine forms a stressed member of the chassis, held in a new tubular steel space-frame whose rear section can quickly be unbolted to allow fitment of a stubby, one-person seat.

Front suspension abandons BMW's Telelever system, used by most boxers, in favour of conventional front forks from the S1000RR sports bike, though without its adjustability. There's a typical vertical monoshock at the rear, with a single-sided swing-arm and shaft housing on the right. Distinctive, black-finished 17-inch wheels combine wire spokes with alloy rims and hubs.

BMW's development team made a big effort to ensure that the nineT's level of detailing is far beyond that of most bikes. Neat alloy shapes are all around; on the air ducts and accessory aluminium seat hump, as well as the petrol tank, which is hand brushed before being lacquered. Machined aluminium parts include the yokes and handlebar clamp.

The bike looks good from the rider's seat, too; the view is of a neat digital display between black-faced analogue speedo and rev-counter, plus a wide, one-piece handlebar. At 222kg with fuel the BMW is light and it's simple too, with no traction control or choice of riding modes. What it does have is sufficient grunt for very lively performance. Fuelling is crisp; midrange acceleration strong. The boxer pulls cleanly at low speed, rips past traffic with a simple twist of the throttle, and sits smoothly and effortlessly at the legal limit.

There's plenty to come at that point, though the wind tugs at your shoulders long before the top speed of around 130mph. No worries, because the nineT is great to ride at a more relaxed pace, its appealing character enhanced by the exhaust's distinctive deep bark.

Handling is light and agile, giving a sportier ride than the classical styling suggests. Braking is sharp, thanks to big 320mm front discs and powerful, ABS-equipped Brembo Mono-bloc calipers.



The BMW is great fun on the road, and it comes with the bonus of built-in potential for customising. Undoing just one bolt allows the standard seat hump to be replaced by the pillion pad that comes with the bike. The electrical system is designed for flexibility; the headlight locates with a single bolt, and unplugs quickly. The standard twin-pipe exhaust can be swapped for a titanium Akrapovic single silencer that can be fitted in either high- or low-level position. It's an invitation to invest time and money making something unique.

Inevitably the NineT's design, quality components and intricate details mean that it's not cheap even as standard. (UK price is £11,600 before adding the test bike's accessory seat, aluminium seat hump and heated grips.) Despite that, following its launch earlier this year it quickly sold out to leave a lengthy waiting list, and no wonder. BMW's factory custom is a stylish, beautifully constructed and finished bike that is even more rewarding to ride than it is to look at.



BMW R nine T



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CLAWING BACK THE DEFICIT

By Paul Malin, Photos by Zep Gori & Felix Romero

PRESENTER, COMMENTATOR, JOURNALIST AND TRACK DAY TEACHER; IT IS EASY TO FORGET THAT PAUL MALIN WAS A SUPERB RACER IN HIS OWN RIGHT. A REGULAR ON LATEST PRODUCTION AND FACTORY BIKE TESTS 'MALER' GRACIOUSLY SENT OVER HIS THOUGHTS ON THE BRAND NEW HONDAS FOR 2015



Honda and HRC are synonymous with two-wheeled motorsport and you only need to look as far as MotoGP to see that they are still very much the team to beat. It used to be the same in grand prix motocross. From 1979 when Britain's Graham Noyce claimed Honda's first world title, the mighty Japanese firm clocked up ten FIM world championships in all but two years ('82 and '83) right up until Eric Geboers in 1990 before pulling out of MX and concentrating their efforts full-time in road race. During that time the Austrian's have moved in, re-decorated the world orange and the 'big four' can't even get a look-in.

Honda for one, has had enough and it's ready to re-claim lost ground, as reflected in HRC's direct involvement in the premier MXGP class in 2014 and as a result, the knowledge gained at the highest level is being pushed through to production quicker than ever before.



CRF450R

Despite their efforts in MXGP where the reward for investment has seen just two visits to the MXGP podium, both of them runner-up positions, Honda's bold claim is that the 2015 model CRF450R is as close to 'factory' as you will get. The re-designed HRC-spec cylinder head and the 3-way engine mode select button (EMSB) that offers different mapping settings at the touch of a button are the obvious changes, along with upgrades to the transmission, piston, crankcases and brakes. The 48mm KYB Pneumatic Spring Forks (PSF) now feature lighter internals with high and low-speed rebound damping adjusters situated on the top of the fork for easier access. Twin silencers also make a return.

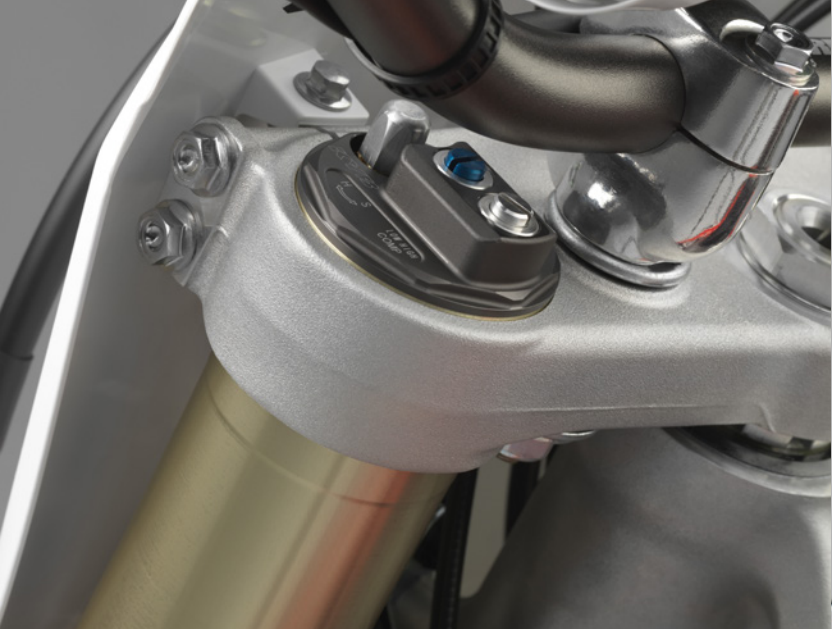
As with all Hondas' the ergonomics are faultless offering a great riding position; from the shape of the Renthal handlebars to where and how you sit on the bike has always been one of Honda's top priorities. And for a big bike, the CRF450R actually feels a lot smaller and easier to handle than you'd think. A great chassis and good handling Kayaba suspension offered up a great overall ride.

In terms of power, the EMSB allows the rider to select the kind of power they want from the bike and with the button situated on the handlebar next to the throttle it could not be easier to use. Mode 1 is the standard setting; Mode 2 is for smoother power delivery (for hard and slick, or muddy conditions) while Mode 3 offers up a more aggressive response. The good news is that all modes do what it says on the tin. Switching between them couldn't be easier, just hold the button down for a second and the LED light will flash once to say you're in Mode 1, twice for Mode 2 and three times for Mode 3. Push it a fourth time and it's back to Mode 1. The 'tin' says you must stop with the engine on idle to make the changes, but you could select neutral and coast and make the switch as the sensors are based on RPM or lack of. But I didn't say that, and nor did they!

Overall the CRF450R was a nice bike to ride and an improvement over the 2014 year model in terms of its standard power delivery alone. Not everyone competes nor do they compete at the highest level but with the EMSB it couldn't be easier to 'tune' your ride.







CRF250R

For the smaller CRF250R efforts have been focussed on improving handling and so the baby-boomer now comes equipped with 49mm Showa air forks, or to give you its full title – the Separate Front Function AIR (forks) with Triple Air Chamber (SFF-AIR-TAC) units. A bit of a mouthful, but the advantages are it's much lighter than the outgoing steel sprung forks it replaces with damping and compression functions being shared between both fork legs. The right fork leg controls both the compression and rebound damping while the left fork leg compresses air using a damperless structure thus achieving a controlled right/left balance for improved feel and stability, particularly over braking bumps. The Showa rear shock spring is also stronger and lighter.

The standard fork settings were set at 12psi but the high-speed hilly circuit at Gallarate just at the end of Milan Malpensa's runway meant that braking bumps were also hit at high speeds causing the fork to fall too quickly through the stroke. To combat this the Showa technician added more air to the top and bottom chambers of the fork leg on the left side via a Schrader valve – now set at 12.5psi and the difference it made was impressive; better stability and more progressive damping was the end result.

And just like the CRF450R the 'two-fiddy' comes equipped with the EMSB 3-way map setting. However, in standard mode the power delivery was a little disappointing. In Mode 2 there was a slight increase at the bottom end but generally a smooth spread of power throughout, while Mode 3 was clearly the most impressive of all the settings, which begs the question: 'Why not have Mode 3 as your starting point and go from there?' It's overall handling and turning capabilities were exceptional and in 'Mode 3' is a fun motorcycle to ride.





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ALPINESTARS

Alpinestars are principally famous for their innovative boots. The company recently unveiled some highlights of their 2015 Technical Motorcycle collection and here are the main off-road models to be found on shelves over the coming year.

The **Tech 10** is the benchmark and the flagship for 'AS' and benefits from a new closure system, improved dual compound footbed and many tweaks to aspects of the firm's most technically advanced footwear (and OTOR's preferred, especially in the red, blue, white scheme showed here). Alpinestars actually cite 16 ways in which the Tech10 deserves your attention as an essential eye-catching and protective piece of riding kit. Check out the website for the full list. The **Tech8** (shown here in black) again comes modified over previous versions in various ways but another new buckle system and re-designed inner bootie are two of the key differences. Lastly the **Tech5** is the softer, less 'hardcore' model. Alpinestars themselves state that the Tech5 incorporates "an innovative microfiber chassis, which is extremely durable and lightweight, a medial biomechanical pivot system for excellent levels of support and stability and extended accordion flex zones, the Tech 5 affords performance fit and high levels of comfort and durability."

www.alpinestars.com/mx/footwear





BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls
by Marian Chytka







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'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

Adam Wheeler Editor and FIM MXGP correspondent

Ray Archer Photographer

Steve Matthes AMA MX and SX correspondent

Martin Heath MotoGP Photographer www.martinheathphoto.com

Simon Cudby Photographer

Matthew Roberts Television Presenter and WSB correspondent

Gavin Emmett TV commentator/Presenter and MotoGP Reporter

Núria Garcia Cover Design

Gabi Álvarez Web developer

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